

# *North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame*

*established 1996 as a program of  
the North Carolina Writers' Network*



SEVENTH INDUCTION CEREMONY

November 10, 2006

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# *North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame*



2006 INDUCTEES



GERALD BARRAX

ELIZABETH DANIELS SQUIRE

FRED CHAPPELL

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# NORTH CAROLINA LITERARY HALL OF FAME SEVENTH INDUCTION CEREMONY

Friday, November 10, 2006, at 7:30 p.m.

## WELCOME

CYNTHIA BARNETT

Executive Director, North Carolina Writers' Network

D. G. MARTIN, Master of Ceremonies

UNC-TV "Bookwatch" Host

## INDUCTION

GERALD BARRAX

Presentation by BETTY ADCOCK

Reading by LENARD MOORE

ELIZABETH DANIELS SQUIRE

Presentation by MARGARET MARON

Acceptance by CHICK SQUIRE

Reading by MARGARET MARON

FRED CHAPPELL

Presentation by KATHRYN STRIPLING BYER

Reading by JAMES APPLEWHITE, SHELBY STEPHENSON

## RECOGNITION OF AWARD'S ARTIST

JANET RESNIK, by MARSHA WARREN

## PRESENTATION OF STUDENT POETRY WINNERS

by REBECCA GODWIN, Barton College

Readings by ASHLEY LA RUE and KRISTIN SARMIENTO

## PRESENTATION OF CAHEC WINNERS

by CYNTHIA BARNETT

and KATHERINE OCCHIPINTI, CAHEC REPRESENTATIVE

Community Affordable Housing Equity Corporation

Readings by RITA PRINCE and CHERYL BEATTIE

## CONCLUDING REMARKS AND BOOK SIGNINGS

D. G. MARTIN, Master of Ceremonies





# FOREWORD

## WEYMOUTH, WRITERS, AND WORDS

WEYMOUTH IS A STURDY HOUSE, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD NOW AND still rising among glossy magnolias and tall pines which lean into the Carolina wind. Its elegance is understated, with none of the ostentation one might expect of a twenty-room house. Weymouth served the Boyd family well for seventy years; since 1979 its service has expanded beyond family to community, its mission marked by the good taste which distinguishes its architectural design.

In 1904, James Boyd, a steel and railroad magnate, purchased 1,200 acres in Southern Pines, and built a home. He christened this new estate “Weymouth,” after a town he had visited in England. Set amidst a magnificent stand of virgin longleaf pines, it served as a country manor where his grandson and namesake, James, often came as a boy to repair frail health and explore the imposing pine forest and surrounding countryside.

Later young James went to Princeton and earned a master’s degree at Cambridge. After serving as an ambulance driver during World War I, an experience which left his health even more fragile, he returned to Weymouth for recovery. In 1919, he and his new wife, the former Katharine Lamont, spent their honeymoon in the house, which by now James Boyd co-owned with his brother, Jackson. The following year, he and Katharine moved to Weymouth and began redesigning it. They moved part of the original house across Connecticut Avenue to become part of Jackson’s new home, now known as the Campbell House. To the remaining structure, they added a second story and two wings, enlarging the Georgian-style house to 9,000 square feet.

James Boyd, now thirty-four years old, left the management of the family business to his brother while he pursued the dream which had begun when he was editor of his high school newspaper: to become a writer. Boyd’s biographer, David Whisnant, observes that Boyd chose to live in Southern Pines because this site “seemed to offer the best conditions for beginning [a

literary career]—a reasonable physical comfort, freedom from distractions, and a mild climate . . . and an opportunity to affirm the tangible values of American life.”

One of the earliest visitors to the newly enlarged home was British novelist and playwright John Galsworthy, who, after reading Boyd’s stories, encouraged him to try a novel, then, on a trip to New York, urged publishers to “keep an eye on James Boyd.” In 1925, Scribner published Boyd’s first novel, *Drums*. It won immediate attention, not only for its story but for its realism—the result of Boyd’s extensive and meticulous research.

Boyd went on to write more novels, a number of short stories and a collection of poetry. In 1941, he expanded his career by purchasing and editing the *Southern Pines Pilot*. Meanwhile, his home became a welcome retreat for many of the best writers of the day: Thomas Wolfe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John P. Marquand, and Paul Green, as well as his editor, the legendary Maxwell Perkins, and his illustrator, N. C. Wyeth. Boyd’s daughter, Nancy Sokoloff, recalls that “During my father’s lifetime there were no ‘writers’ colonies.’ Our living room and that of Paul and Elizabeth Green served as settings for serious work and conversations about Southern writing and its future.”

The serious conversation went beyond literature. During World War II, Boyd organized and served as the National Chairman of the Free Company of Players, a group of writers who were concerned that constitutional rights might be compromised during the frenzy of wartime. Among the writers joining him in writing plays for broadcast over national radio were Orson Welles, Paul Green, Archibald MacLeish, and Stephen Vincent Benet.

In 1944, after James Boyd’s untimely death, Katharine continued living at Weymouth and publishing the *Pilot*. She and her children donated 400 pine-filled acres to the state for development into the Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve. When she died in 1974, she left the house, remaining land, and forest to Sandhills Community College, which in 1977 put the estate on the market. Fearful that this treasure would be demolished by developers, two friends of the Boyds undertook the task of saving it. Elizabeth Stevenson (Buffie) Ives organized Friends of Weymouth; Sam Ragan, then editor of the *Pilot*, rallied support from the State of North Carolina, the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the North Carolina Writers’ Conference, and the North Carolina Poetry Society. The first person Ragan approached, playwright Paul Green, made the first donation, \$1,000. Later, Moore County resident Bob Drummond provided a major boost with an initial contribution of \$20,000 and a later donation of an equal amount.

Since 1979, the house, surrounded by twenty-two acres, has flourished as a full-fledged cultural center. College groups and various arts groups hold meetings and retreats here. The great room and back lawn host concerts by chamber music groups and such notables as Doc Watson and lectures by speakers as varied as social critic Tom Wolfe and sociologist John Shelton Reed. There have been also frequent readings by North Carolina writers such as Clyde Edgerton, Kaye Gibbons, and Shelby Stephenson, as well as an annual poetry festival the last Saturday in June.

In addition to formal programs, Weymouth has hosted one of former North Carolina Poet Laureate Sam Ragan's favorite projects: residencies offering writers, artists, and composers stays of up to two weeks to pursue their art in James Boyd's hospitable home. Poet and novelist Guy Owen was the first writer-in-residence; in 1981, just a few months before his death, he also made his last public reading at Weymouth. By the year 2000 more than 500 writers and artists had held residencies here. Many testify that their art has flourished on this site; some even credit the hovering spirit of James Boyd and perhaps those of his many literary guests with providing additional creative impetus.

It is fitting that Weymouth, where James Boyd and hundreds of other writers have found congenial conditions for their work, is the site of the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. It is also fitting that the space set aside for this distinction is the upstairs Boyd library, where James did his own writing, often by dictating to a stenographer as he paced back and forth, taking on the voices of characters. Perhaps the spirits of those who are honored here will join the chorus of literary masters whose influence echoes through the halls and across the grounds of Weymouth.

SALLY BUCKNER

# INTRODUCTION

And down the centuries that wait ahead there'll be some whisper of our name, some mention and devotion to the dream that brought us here.

—Paul Green, *The Lost Colony*

FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS, NORTH CAROLINA HAS BEEN BLESSED with the “mention and devotion” of a great host of writers living and working in the state. A rich literary heritage is a legacy cherished by all North Carolinians.

The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame is established as a perpetual opportunity to remember, honor, and celebrate that heritage. By marking the contribution of its literary giants of every generation, it will support and encourage the further flourishing of excellent literature in the state.

The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame was the dream of a generation of the state's most dedicated cultural leaders, mobilized by Sam Ragan, former poet laureate of North Carolina. It was authorized by a Joint Resolution of the General Assembly on July 23, 1993, then formally established by a grant from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources to the North Carolina Writers' Network, a literary organization serving writers and readers across the state since 1985.

The Hall of Fame is physically located in a notable shrine of North Carolina writing. The Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities in Southern Pines is the former home and workplace of novelist James Boyd and his wife Katharine, a distinguished journalist and patron of the arts. The large room where plaques, pictures, books, and other memorabilia of the state's honored writers are displayed was Boyd's workroom.

Members of the Hall of Fame are selected by a committee of writers. The goal is to choose widely and inclusively from the great parade of novelists, poets, short story writers, playwrights, journalists, and storytellers of all sorts who have called themselves North Carolinians. While the first year

honored only those from the past, the Hall of Fame now joins other notable cultural award programs in honoring living writers.

Seventy-five years ago, an editor visiting North Carolina marveled at the literary liveliness of the place where, she said, writers flourished in “an atmosphere of plain living and high thinking that I never experienced before.”

In the spirit of those who over the centuries have graced North Carolina with a literature of such quality, beauty and power, the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame proudly honors writers who have achieved enduring stature in their mention and devotion to their art and to the state.

ROY PARKER, JR.

# THE LITERARY HALL OF FAME AWARD

THE AWARD THAT WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE 2006 LITERARY HALL of Fame inductees is a work of North Carolina art pottery by Janet Resnik of Chapel Hill. Ms. Resnik has been a self-supporting potter since 1974, specializing in functional dinner and serving pieces glazed with impressionistic landscape, animal and flower designs.

Ms. Resnik describes her pottery: "My work is inspired by life on my farm in rural North Carolina, where I live with my family and a variety of animals, including horses, donkeys, dogs, cats and guineas. I'm best known for my trees that are depicted in all seasons; everything I make is a reflection of my life and environment. I started out bringing my pots to craft fairs and my business has grown to the point where I sell all my work out of the studio to wholesalers and private customers. My affordable stoneware is meant to be used daily, is lead-free, and is also dishwasher and oven safe."

With a B.A. from Vassar College, Ms. Resnik has studied with the well-known potters Jim Pringle, Sally Prange, and Val Cushing and has appeared at numerous juried exhibitions. In 1997 she was artist-in-residence at Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minnesota.

Galleries that carry Ms. Resnik's work in North Carolina are Alamance County Arts Council (Graham), Womancraft (Chapel Hill), Front Porch Pottery (Swansboro), Sea Grass (Beaufort), and Solo Art Gallery (Winston-Salem). Her work is also carried by Mountain Made (Pendleton, South Carolina) and Touch of Earth (Williamsburg, Virginia). For further information you may visit Ms. Resnik's website: [www.janetresnikpottery.com](http://www.janetresnikpottery.com).

The award for 2006 is a large pottery tray with an impressionistic depiction of the Weymouth House and gardens.



# LITERARY HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

## 1996-2006

A. R. AMMONS, 2000

GERALD BARRAX, 2006

DORIS BETTS, 2004

HELEN BEVINGTON, 2000

LEGETTE BLYTHE, 2002

JAMES BOYD, 1996

FRED CHAPPELL, 2006

CHARLES W. CHESNUTT, 1996

JONATHAN DANIELS, 1996

OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN, 2000

BURKE DAVIS, 2000

WILMA DYKEMAN, 1998

JOHN EHLE, 1997

INGLIS FLETCHER, 1996

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, 1998

PAUL GREEN, 1996

BERNICE KELLY HARRIS, 1996

GEORGE MOSES HORTON, 1996

HARRIET ANN JACOBS, 1997

RANDALL JARRELL, 1996

GERALD JOHNSON, 1996

JAMES MCGIRT, 2004

JOHN CHARLES MCNEILL, 1998

JOSEPH MITCHELL, 1997

PAULI MURRAY, 1998

GUY OWEN, 1996

FRANCES GRAY PATTON, 1997

WILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER

(O. HENRY), 1996

REYNOLDS PRICE, 2002

SAM RAGAN, 1997

CHRISTIAN REID, 2002

GLEN ROUNDS, 2002

ROBERT RUARK, 2000

LOUIS RUBIN, 1997

ELIZABETH SPENCER, 2002

ELIZABETH DANIELS SQUIRE, 2006

THAD STEM, JR., 1996

RICHARD WALSER, 1996

MANLY WADE WELLMAN, 1996

TOM WICKER, 2004

JONATHAN WILLIAMS, 1998

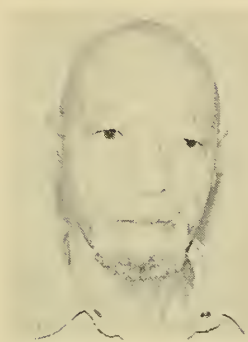
THOMAS WOLFE, 1996





# GERALD WILLIAM BARRAX

b. 1933



POET, TEACHER, AND LITERARY EDITOR

Gerald William Barrax was born in Attalla, Alabama, on June 21, 1933, and grew up in Pittsburgh after moving there with his family in 1944. He earned his B.A. in English from Duquesne University and M.A. from the University of Pittsburgh. He was editor of *Obsidian*, a publication that reviews black literature, and he is considered a major contemporary influence on younger writers for his attention to craft, the music of the work, making the mystical and the remembered clear to

readers, and his belief in drawing from the best traditions of poetry writing. In the spring 1997 issue of *Callaloo* the journal's editor writes that Barrax "... shapes and reshapes the images, metaphors, and ideas of his poems until they satisfy his stringent requirements." He also writes to put on the page the truth in the history of black Americans.

Besides his five books and one chapbook, Jerry Barrax has been anthologized in over three dozen works and his poems appear in many journals, such as *the Georgia Review*, *the Southern Review*, and *Poetry*. He has received several awards, including the Raleigh Medal of Arts (1993), the Sam Ragan Award for Contribution to the Fine Arts in North Carolina (1991), and the 1983 Callaloo Creative Writing Award for Nonfiction Prose. After completing his graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh in 1969, Barrax moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where he was professor of English and writer-in-residence at North Carolina State University for many years.

Among his books are *Leaning Against the Sun* (1992), nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award, and his most recent, the perceptive, moving collection *From a Person Sitting in Darkness: New and Selected Poems* (Louisiana State University Press, 1998), one in the Southern Messenger Poets series edited by Dave Smith. The title is taken from the

epigraph Barrax has chosen from Mark Twain: “The Person Sitting in Darkness is almost sure to say, ‘There is something curious about this—curious and unaccountable. There must be two Americas, one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive’s new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on, then kills him to get his land.’”

Barrax, who tells the reader in his poem “Not Often near Such Water” that he is “Of African, Indian, and Dutch ancestry,” never roams far in consciousness from that black ancestry, the injustices done against his race, and individual moments of injustice he has experienced and seen. That is especially true of his first two books of poetry, *Another Kind of Rain: Poems* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970) and *An Audience of One: Poems* (University of Georgia Press, 1980). In fact, *Furious Flower I*, a video anthology of African American verse during the last half of the twentieth century, groups Gerald Barrax’s work with that of its “Seers,” poets who began writing during the 1970s. The term suits him because a seer possesses extraordinary gifts to venture up and out of Plato’s cave, to see beyond shadowy, reflected reality inside the cave, even to refuse to be “the person sitting in darkness” despite the consequences. Like Langston Hughes, one of his heroes, Barrax sees straight-on and finds a frank, forthright voice to describe just what he sees.

*Furious Flower’s* 1998 conference organizer and series producer Joanne Gabbin says that “African American poetry is both furious and flowering; it’s a poetry of grace and rage, of identity and struggle, combining beauty and political activism.” What Gabbin says of African American poetry is also true of the poetry of Gerald Barrax.

The surface-layer tone of Barrax’s best published work is quiet, reflective, and worried-hopeful. The dynamic is andante, respectful of life, accepting of it, yet with a lyric note or two of yearning for cessation of grief. The surface of his work is marked by serenity, grace, images of the poet/speaker’s quest for identity, and a longing for beauty that commonly imbues poetry. But boiling, roiling, moiling down below are activist energies for change and justice without continuing the violence of the past. Barrax’s work supports the scholarly agenda set forth in 1998 by Washington, D.C., black poet and critic E. Ethelbert Miller: “We’re fifty years behind. We need to have our work assessed not just as ‘protest poetry’ but as we would any great literature.”

Barrax’s poetry in this latest collection would have no trouble measuring up as literature, despite the great variety of his poetic types and sub-

jects—or perhaps because of it. Why should variety be a flaw? It can just as easily signal experimentation and openness to tapping new ways of seeing through trying new forms. In a review of *From a Person Sitting in Darkness*, *Publishers Weekly* calls Jerry Barrax an “earnest, observant poet” and notes his progress in forty years of published work “from a mélange of promisingly contradictory goals to a more direct, hortatory style.” We should remember that “hortatory” can mean “urging, persuasive” but also the more subtle “yearning.”

One early poem, “Odysseus at the Mast,” brings together for Barrax his characteristic voice, his graceful style, his political urging, and his wise yearning. This narrative poem tells the classical myth of Odysseus dragged away from the Lotus-Eaters and bound to the tall mast by his men, who stop their ears with beeswax. Some of his images of the women are crude and naturalistic. But the poet has also elevated the oft-told tale to a classic moral battle suffered many times for each of us (“Through life after life in the ship at the mast”) between our freedom to exercise passion—perhaps absolutely—and our reason that saves itself by quenching desire. In the last lines, Barrax particularizes to his own experience as the black man who wants to mutiny against white norms—unscrutinized and unjudged at every step. But, “lashed halfway up the mast,” Odysseus is “impotent” to “mutiny.” And worse, he knows it:

They lashed him halfway up the mast  
And he screamed above the silent oarsmen  
As they rowed him relentless away  
From the bone-cluttered island shore . . .

The ship went on by wind and oars.  
The voices faded.  
They shrugged, sucked their sharp teeth,  
and went back to their flowers.

His anxious men, blessed with the silence  
Of the blind, saw only the soundless agony  
As he fought the bonds of the rigid mast  
For the vision the Sirens never dreamed  
In a world that faded for ever as he moved

Through life after life in the ship at the mast  
And his screaming for release, ceased.  
They lowered him down among their flesh  
And he mastered again his own flesh and his ship  
And remembered, once, an impotent whim for mutiny.

Here is a Christ-figure resurrected in order to become a company man. One who “masters” his flesh and his ship is in part a slave, Barrax appears to be suggesting.

Music for beauty, music for healing, music for remembering where he was the last time he heard the piece, and music for itself—these are important themes in Barrax’s work. A poem from the 1990s is a narrative-within-a-narrative: the narrator, swimming through waves far back to the beach, thinks of sharks, then wills himself to be calm as he knows his wife and two daughters must be watching him anxiously from the shore. Out so far from the voices on the beach, much farther out than he had thought he was being carried, the ocean is quiet, and the speaker/swimmer senses that it “seems to be holding its breath too,/ Deciding./ I see that I’m not afraid.” This perception of “not afraid,” plus the reminder earlier of the “wave phenomenon” and sound waves of music vs. quiet sea take the speaker back to April 1945:

The day FDR died they played the “Meditation” from Thaïs  
All day on the radio.  
I was twelve. I’d already begun violin lessons.  
I’m frozen in an attitude between the (I’ll make up a name)  
Elm tree in the front yard  
And cobblestoned Stranahan Street in Pittsburgh.  
I’ve remained in that spot for forty years,  
As though that’s where I was the moment they announced his death  
And began playing his favorite piece all day.  
I’ve learned it, practiced, memorized,  
Play it on Youth Day in Warren Methodist Church  
When I’m (I’ll make this up) about fifteen.  
Each time I played it, hear it, I remember him.  
*There is nothing but fear itself.*  
Can they see me?  
If they knew how *calm* I am!

The dynamic between present and past, water and cobblestone, music and silence, the two layers of the slip of the tongue: There is nothing but fear itself, aloneness on the lawn with his violin and now his family grouped on the beach (“Can they see me?”) re-create not only themselves as if in life, but they also show us how consciousness works—just as great a miracle. One experience sends us to another just as the waves send the swimmer’s body up then down then up then down as he cuts through them to the shore. And neither place—the remembered one used for creating present calm nor the present one submerged so as not to feel fear of sharks and/or

drowning—is safe from death.

A new, previously uncollected poem also deals with music and Pittsburgh, but cuts into consciousness at a later year:

Pittsburgh, 1948: The Music Teacher

I don't know where my mother got him—  
whose caricature he was—or how  
he found me, to travel by streetcars  
on Saturday mornings to the Negro  
home, our two rooms and bath on the Hornsbys'  
second floor. His name was Professor  
Something-or-Other Slavic, portly,  
florid man, bald pate surrounded  
by stringy gray hair. Everything  
about him was threadbare: wing collar,  
string tie, French cuffs, cut-away coat.  
His sausage fingers were grimy, his nails  
dirty. I think, now, he was one of the War's  
Displaced Persons, who accepted with grace  
coming to give violin lessons  
to a 15-year-old alien boy  
(displaced here myself from a continent,  
from a country I couldn't name,  
and a defector from Alabama).  
I was the debt he had to pay  
on the short end of a Refugee's desperate  
wager, or prayer, to redeem the body  
before the soul. I don't know why  
my mother didn't give him  
his three dollars. I had to do it.

One morning he stood  
at my side waving his bow  
in time to my playing, swayed  
once and crumpled to the kitchen  
floor that she had made  
spotless for him, taking  
the music stand down.  
I stood terrified until she  
ran in and we helped him to his feet.  
He finished my lesson in dignified shame,  
and I knew, from pure intuition,  
he had not eluded the hounds of hunger.

Outside of death camps I'd seen liberated



in newsreels and *Life*, it was the first time, I think,  
I'd felt sorry for anyone white.

In just three cited poems it all begins to come together: the serenity and calm; the reflective, observant voice; and the music, the beauty, and the detailed settings. Beneath all that in Gerald Barrax's poetry—and running counter to it like a riptide—is a call for fairness and justice, the sound arising from the deep. This brusque, raw power for “No!” arises from the same bodily source he discovered when “pulling my chin down into my neck/ to get the low notes with my adolescent bass,” after he started singing in the church choir. It is personal and idiosyncratic; can't be replicated; and must have shocked the young, civilized, music-student-turned-poet when he perceived it in himself.

Barrax now serves as emeritus professor in the new MFA program at North Carolina State University, still helping young writers find their eyes, ears, and voice. He has been the recipient of a Ford Foundation Graduate Fellowship and a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and was a North Carolina Writers Conference Honoree in 2000. In May 2006, North Carolina Poet Laureate Kathryn Stripling Byer selected Gerald Barrax's *From a Person Sitting in Darkness* as the North Carolina Arts Council “Book of the Month,” and several poems from that collection are posted to [www.ncarts.org](http://www.ncarts.org).

Gerald William Barrax lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with his wife, Joan; he is the father of five and the grandfather of two. We heartily welcome Jerry as a 2006 inductee to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame and are truly glad he came to dwell among us in September 1969.

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Additional information on Mr. Barrax and his work can be found on the web at [www.ncwriters.org](http://www.ncwriters.org) or in:

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# ELIZABETH DANIELS SQUIRE

## 1926 – 2001



REPORTER, NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COLUMNIST, and mystery writer Elizabeth Daniels Squire was born July 17, 1926, in Raleigh, North Carolina, to renowned newspaper editor and Presidential press secretary and biographer Jonathan Daniels and Elizabeth Bridgers Daniels. A wry humorist and intuitive student of human nature, Elizabeth, “Liz,” noted how much more supportive of each other as a group mystery writers are than other types of writers. She herself was often the first to show newly published mystery writers

what they needed to know about the field. Her theory was that “Romance writers write about love and beauty and romantic interludes all day. Look at what we write about—we put our evil parts onto paper every day, leaving our goodness for the real world to experience!”

In her case, there was much goodness indeed. Besides her contribution, beginning in 1960, of a dozen-plus book-length works of fiction and nonfiction, the latter in such varied areas as palmistry, mail-order shopping, and heroes of journalism, she volunteered good, sound advice and hard work to the literary arts, assisting such nonprofits as the North Carolina Writers’ Network and the Southeastern Chapter of Mystery Writers of America. Fellow “Sister in Crime” member and award-winning mystery author Margaret Maron writes that Liz’s “generous nature” motivated her to edit MWA’s newsletter for years. The same generosity and gift for writing, plus her teaching ability, took Liz to many states to encourage children and teens to read and write. Liz herself had overcome dyslexia to read, write, and graduate from Vassar College before she became a journalist, so she was sympathetic to students’ working with their ADD.

The thesis of Elizabeth Daniels Squire’s *Heroes of Journalism* (1974), short biographical sketches of twenty-five journalists beginning with Benjamin Franklin, is that journalists have profound social responsibilities and thus should be advocates. Besides advocating for student literacy, she



believed strongly in the value of all that is learned through story. When she discovered, shortly before 2000, that the North Carolina governor's mansion in the western part of the state had little but Reader's Digest Condensed Books on its shelves, she began a committed campaign to get North Carolina writers to donate a copy of each of their works to the mansion. And she succeeded, just as she succeeded as a columnist in Beirut and a reporter in Connecticut. Liz was a strong, unselfish, highly literate, and well educated writer who believed in justice but also in learning and using "memory tricks" to help keep one's own life in good order. Margaret Maron recalls Elizabeth's telling her, "If you absolutely must remember to take something with you when you leave the house, then put your car keys with it. You can't drive very far without them."

Elizabeth Daniels Squire grew up the daughter of the editor of the *Raleigh News & Observer*, and her first mystery, *Kill the Messenger* (1990), a "forceful and engrossing" read, according to *Publishers Weekly*, is set in the newspaper world. A murdered newspaper editor's son has forty-eight hours to find his father's killer; otherwise, a Mafia-connected newspaper giant's \$60 million offer to buy the family's paper takes effect. An excellent, airtight mystery, the novel's description of driving through a flooded river on a valley road is taken from Liz's real-life experience, making *PW*'s evaluation of *Kill the Messenger* as "engrossing" the perfect word-choice.

The Peaches Dann series began in 1994 with *Who Killed What's-Her-Name?* Like the author herself—called "Peaches" as a child—Peaches is absent-minded, but she manages to find the killer as she works her way through writing her own book on memory-jogging devices, "How to Survive without a Memory," so the result is a witty story-within-a-story. Peaches is a spunky, fifty-five-year-old heroine, with "dry, sly, self-effacing wit,"—that, again, from Maron—much like Liz, so she is a good reader's companion through all the ups and downs of crime-detection.

Six other books in the Peaches Dann series follow this one, each centered on a particular interest of Liz's: medieval memory systems; the eccentrics of the North Carolina mountains (Liz and C. B. Squire, her husband, lived in Weaverville, north of Asheville); palmistry; old houses; and historic preservation. And as Peaches learns about these intriguing subjects, the reader does too.

Liz Squire was initially drawn to suspense by reading Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Rudyard Kipling, and Southeastern regional fiction in the genre. Her writing habit was to get up early and write in the quiet of early morning before she had said much by way of distraction from the task

ahead. The night before she would avoid writer's block the next morning by "programming" herself with a specific problem in the story as she went to sleep. "I usually wake up with the words ready to flow through my fingers," Liz said.

In November 2006 The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame inducts Elizabeth Daniels Squire for all these reasons and more. She was the loving wife of C. B. Squire, former correspondent for the *New York Times* and an editor; the mother of three—Hart, Mark, and Worth; good sister and friend to three fine women; and kind cousin. Journalist, nonfiction author, suspense novelist, selfless volunteer, and exceptionally generous philanthropist to the literary arts—we hail Liz Squire and welcome her to the company of illustrious inductees.

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# FRED CHAPPELL

b. 1936



FRED CHAPPELL WAS BORN MAY 28, 1936, AND grew up on a farm in Canton, near Asheville, North Carolina. Chappell, who teaches at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, where he lives with his wife, Susan, is the award-winning author of over forty books of poetry, fiction, and essays. He was poet laureate of North Carolina from 1997 to 2002 and has been called by one reviewer “truly a national treasure” for the range of his knowledge and wisdom, the variety of poetic voices and modes he can call upon, and the sage wholeness he embodies between reason, common sense,

humor, and the spirit. In some of his work, poetry and prose, Chappell uses “playful erudition to create a humorous” contrast between the South of forty years ago and the postmodern, commerce-loving South of today. In others of his works, the erudition is not for word-fun or satire—the road rage of the gifted thinker—but because that is another natural voice of Fred Chappell, the classical and Renaissance scholar who received his master’s degree from Duke University.

In a review of *Look Back All the Green Valley* (1999), the fourth volume of Chappell’s Kirkman Tetralogy about the Kirkman family of Southern Appalachia, one reader writes, “Chappell’s books make you want to move to Appalachia and learn to play the banjo, yet they also contain a subtle and intellectual beauty through his use of language,” as they deal with Jess Kirkman’s quest to know his father. The original stories in all four of these novels central to Chappell’s work show his deep love for his family, for flesh-and-blood cousins out in the county and “Shadow-Cousins . . . who cloud [family stories and who] would cloud the earth,” love for the other mountain people of “fine energy,” and for the land of mountains, sun, and shade—all of near-Wagnerian proportions. In one volume that shows the poet’s ability to assay the red clay for archetypal, mythic elements, *Midquest: A Poem*

(1981), Chappell observes from the perspective of a boy, “My Grandmother Wash[ing] Her Feet”:

Gray but edged with brown  
Like an old photograph, her hair shone yellow.  
A tiredness mantled her fine energy.  
She shifted, sluicing water under instep.

“O what’s the use,” she said. “Water seeks  
Its level. If your daddy thinks that teaching school  
In a white shirt makes him a likelier man,  
What’s to blame? Leastways, he won’t smother  
Of mule-farts or have to starve for a pinch of rainfall.  
Nothing new gets started without the old’s  
Plowed under, or halfway under. We sprouted from dirt,  
Though, and it’s with you, and dirt you’ll never forget.”

“No Mam.”

“Don’t you say me No Mam yet.  
Wait till you get your chance to deny it.”

...

“Just about the time you’ll think your blood  
Is clean, here will come dirt in a natural shape  
You never dreamed. It’ll rise up saying, Fred,  
Where’s that mule you’re supposed to march behind?  
Where’s your overalls and roll-your owns?  
Where’s your Blue Tick hounds and Domineckers?  
Not all the money in this world can wash true-poor  
True rich. Fatback just won’t change to artichokes.”

“What’s artichokes?”

The foot-washing grandmother looks ahead into the grandson’s coming years to see that he might deny his farm-country roots once he gets to the city. In his 2004 collection of edgy, satirical poetry, *Backsass*, Chappell entitles one poem, “No, Said St. Peter,” referring to the denial the denier of Jesus, Saint Peter, offers the second character in the poem when he asks to be let into heaven. Lack of loyalty and punishment for breaking ties is a subject the poet returns to often in his work.

Chappell gives his “steely,” “passionate” grandmother an important role as storyteller in the third volume of the Kirkman Tetralogy, too, as

she prepares to die. Though weakening in the present time of the novel, in Jess's memory she exchanges family stories with her daughter, narrator Jess Kirkman's mother, as if she were handing over the keys to a vast castle of memory, one key at a time.

Early in the book, before the flashbacks to a livelier time of setting out the garden, making music, bringing in the produce, canning and preserving, then enjoying the green tomatoes and crabapples put up for winter, the dying grandmother and Cora, Jess's mother, waste no words between them as death hastens towards their house:

"O daughter, my grandmother said or thought, the hardest is to know that you must come this way, too, sometime."

"We must all of us die, my mother said or thought. I cannot bear it you are going away. After you are gone and if I can learn to live with that, it will be easier for me to die."

"Nothing will make it easier, my grandmother said. Not even having you by my side right now makes it easier. No matter how much you are with me, I am still alone."

"I'm right here," [Cora assures her.]

"Yes, but I'm alone. I can't well say how alone I am."

Then the grandmother recalls a time when Cora climbed into a big poplar in the back pasture and stayed there all day and into the evening. Finally, as the family was eating dinner, Cora came back and stood and cried at the window. Her mother came out and found her, "tears as big as seed corn." Cora hugged her mother's waist and said she "[was] crying because [she] thought none of [them] remembered [her]."

The grandmother adds,

"You said it was like you had passed away to another world and was not one of us any longer."

"I had forgotten, my mother said or thought, but now when you remind me, I remember. You were still wearing your apron and I pressed my face against the pocket and there was a paring knife in it and a ribbon of apple peel and I stood back and began pulling the apple peel out like I was untying a present and forgot all my sorrow."

"Did you, now? I don't remember that part."

"There was always something in your pocket. A spool of white thread with the needle slipped down the side. A little ball of string or sea-grass twine. A rusty spoon. . . ."

With Jess's feisty grandmother's death acting as narrative parentheses to the stories in volume three of the tetralogy, it is interesting that he



entitles a 1985 novel *I Am One of You Forever*, implying that through memory and dream we are never lost to those we have known and loved in life, and a 1996 composition *Family Gathering*. These dyads of family and separation, along with other dyads of tender love and raunchiness, life in the classroom and life in bars, commitment to teaching and resentment of (a professor's relative) poverty, justice and injustice, modern and postmodern students' attitude towards learning, parents' former support of college teachers and parents' present-time litigiousness, the wit of the ancients and the dull, broad humor Chappell sees expressed on TV and in commercial culture today—and on and on. These kinds of A-B comparisons may stem from Chappell's classical training or perhaps his mind is drawn to that kind of comparison to drive a poem.

Whatever the case, critic James E. Person's word for Fred Chappell's *Farewell, I'm Bound to Leave You* is applicable to his many other works, especially to one of the finest, "The Reluming," a mystical poem Chappell wrote for the North Carolina Writers Conference in 2002: "Mr. Chappell . . . draw[s] upon a rich tale-telling skill to bring into merry remembrance the stories of those who themselves stand soberly at the still point of the turning Earth, where time and the timeless intersect."

For decades Fred Chappell reviewed poetry for the *Raleigh News & Observer*; he wrote his last column on Sunday, June 25, 2006, and the book editor, Peder Zane, introduced Chappell's column that day with the summary statement that Chappell was "never shy" about panning what he considered to be overrated, such as Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*. That is an apt assessment of Chappell's brave critiques, but when he liked a book of poetry, he was also generous and detailed in his presentation so that book-page readers could see what his appreciation was all about. On June 25, Chappell added this to his goals for the column over the years:

"[I]f my focus has been local, it has not been provincial. I knew from the beginning that our state birthed or sheltered many poets as good as any to be found in our nation. My task has been to locate where the specific treasures have lain and to try to draw accurate maps to them.

"I have not counted the number of books I have reviewed in this endeavor; it must have been scores, maybe even hundreds. And of course I read a great many more than I found worthy of review space. But if my purpose has been openly partisan, to observe and call attention to North Carolina poetry, it has not been dishonest. I detest boosterism and have praised work only when I thought it solid. I read an equal number of books by poets from other states and other nations, so my bases of comparison were not limited. My estimates

of quality may have been mistaken; critical opinions are at last merely opinions. But they have not been false.

"So I am able to aver with a clear conscience that poets like James Applewhite and Peter Makuck, Betty Adcock and Eleanor Ross Taylor stand shoulder to shoulder with the best in the country. If their names are not so well known as those of John Ashbery, say, or Mary Oliver, that fact is much more an accident of geography and fashion than a gauge of quality."

That is Fred Chappell the critic and essayist, a voice as forthright and intelligent as the many voices of his novels and poems. We are honored to have him gathered with our geographical family here in North Carolina and now as a 2006 inductee to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. As poet Henry Taylor writes, "In learning, scope, and grace, Fred Chappell is one of the truly rare participants in the great conversation that is the Western literary tradition." Chappell's awards and honors are many, and now the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame gives him another well-deserved honor.

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## IN TRIBUTE:

### SAMUEL TALMADGE RAGAN

1915–1996

SAM RAGAN WAS FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS ONE OF NORTH CAROLINA'S leading men of letters. As the state's first secretary of the Department of Cultural Resources and first chairman of the North Carolina Arts Council, he was instrumental in making the arts in the state accessible to a wide, varied audience. Born in Granville County, Ragan began writing poetry in grade school. By the time he was a student at Atlantic Christian (Barton) College, he knew he wanted to be a newspaperman. Ragan joined the *Raleigh News & Observer* in 1941 and, by the time he left in 1968 to buy *The Pilot* in Southern Pines, he was the *News & Observer's* managing and executive editor. He stayed at *The Pilot* until his death, continuing to write "Southern Accent," the column he began in 1948.

Ragan published six collections of verse and four works on nonfiction. His poetry has been called "sensitive to the seasons of life," the sureties and contradictions of living, the elements in which we exist . . . written out of a Tar Heel's sense of place." When Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., appointed him North Carolina Poet Laureate in 1982, Ragan responded, "I don't know that I'll write poetry on demand, but I would like to encourage North Carolinians to read and write poetry. I'll be happy to do that."

#### THE MARKED AND UNMARKED

from *To the Water's Edge*, 1971

I cannot say upon which luminous evening  
I shall go out beyond the stars,  
To windless spaces and unmarked time,  
Turning nights to days and days to nights.

*continued next page*

This is the place where I live.  
I planted this tree.  
I watched it grow.  
The leaves fall and I scuff then with my feet.  
This is the street on which I walk.  
I have walked it many times.  
Sometimes it seems there are echoes of my  
walking—

In the mornings, in the nights,  
In those long evenings of silence and stars

—the unmarked stars.





